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Residents Using Public Hearing Format To Object to Development Proposals

You can never beat City Hall, so the saying goes. Well, don't tell that to the residents in our communities who are facing proposed development plans in their neighborhoods.

By reading our editorial page this week, as well as in the past couple of issues, you will notice the concerns of Scotch Plains residents regarding the proposed Magnolia Gardens nursing facility. On top of that, Fanwood residents are upset over a plan to build an apartment complex on the former Dean Oil site.

Meanwhile, Westfielders have been raising a stink over a plan to develop a small section of Brightwood Park, a natural habitat, for a multi-purpose ballfield.

We have been receiving letters and telephone calls on all three proposals, especially regarding the ones in Scotch Plains and Fanwood, not to mention the number of residents who showed up at their respective municipal buildings to oppose the plans.

In fact, due to a packed Borough Council Chambers at the Fanwood Planning Board meeting on February 24, the apartment application had to be postponed to Thursday, March 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the Park Middle School auditorium on Park Avenue in Scotch Plains.

Meanwhile, The Scotch Plains Board of Adjustment began to hear the Magnolia Gardens case on March 4 — a meeting which lasted five hours. That case will continue this Monday, March 15.

As far as Brightwood goes, the Town Council and Recreation Commission are awaiting the findings of a wetlands study at the park, specifically, the pandle section where the field would be constructed.

In the meantime, officials have proposed that grant money from the state's Clean Communities fund be used to pay for a cleanup of the park. In addition, groups and individuals are being sought to adopt the park, similar to the Adopt-the-Highway program.

When residents are opposed to a specific project, it is important that they voice their concerns on the record at public hearings. If there are no objectors to a specific project, our elected officials will feel more compelled to approve it.

Case in point: Village Supermarkets' (ShopRite) application for a store on the Westfield Lumber and Home Center property on North Avenue. The Westfield Planning Board rejected the plan, while Garwood's board approved it. That case is pending in State Superior Court in Elizabeth.

Opposition to the apartment plan centers on the proposed density of the project. The original proposal was for 36 units. That proposal, though, is now being scaled back to 24 units. While the developers have said that public opposition was not a factor in their decision, residents have, nevertheless, made a strong statement about what they believe is inappropriate development of the property.

Township residents are opposing the assisted living facility on the grounds that it does not belong in a residential neighborhood.

Public hearings are a legal opportunity for residents to comment on how they believe a particular case might impact a neighborhood — negatively or positively.

We will keep an eye on all three cases and report the facts as they develop.

Letters to the Editor

Brightwood Park History Is Valuable; Residents Must Strive To Preserve It

Brightwood Park in Westfield - and the Scotch Plains Country Club beyond it on Jerusalem Road - are all we have left of the "Big Woods" which throughout the 19th century filled most of the area northwest of the village streets.

This shows as the largest single block of forest land left in 1862 in all of Westfield, in the detailed survey map we have on exhibit in the Municipal Building's Community Room.

Most of this area was part of the inheritance of William Miller, our fast settler in 1727. His property extended in a diagonal strip due west from the Miller-Cory farm on West Fields Lot No. 55 through Lots Nos. 54 and 59 to Lot 62, now in Scotch Plains. Lot No. 62 was the ancestral property, assigned to his grandfather as one of the Associates of 1699 under rights he acquired in 1665.

If anyone cares, there isn't anything around more ancient and honorable than this tie to our original forest lands.

The fact that it carried over to present days is no accident. Earlier in the 20th century it became neglected as undevel-

oped land and started to fill up with shacks, turned into dilapidated housing. These were bought up as bits and pieces by a public-spirited citizen and re-consolidated into a park, for the benefit of future generations.

The story of this success is well documented in a book of pictures on file in the archives of the Westfield Historical Society.

Brightwood, like any park in town, is held in trust for us by the Town Council, and only at their discretion. There's always a tug between parks and newer uses for land and if we want to keep fine parks we'd better say so.

Homer J. Hall
Former Westfield Town Historian
New Hampshire

More Letters On Page 5

Westfield Should Develop Program For Effective Pest Management

The time has come for Westfield to develop an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, joining other responsible communities like Madison, Princeton, Bernardsville, Chatham, Cranford, Middletown, Millburn, Verona, Rahway, county governments like Union, Bergen, Passaic, Essex, Monmouth and Ocean, The State of New Jersey (by Executive Order), The New Jersey Highway Authority, plus other governing groups including school boards, for a total over 68.

Simply put, IPM means using alternatives, whenever possible to reduce the amount of pesticides and herbicides that we are using in our homes, in our gardens, our lawns, in our parks and our municipal buildings.

Fortunately for our growing, younger families in Westfield, our schools have been practicing this for many years in their buildings and their playgrounds.

Children whose yards were treated with herbicides and pesticides had four times the risk of a certain cancer says one study that also found smaller risks from other home pesticides. (Study performed at me University of North Carolina's School of Public Health). Certainly children are more susceptible as they run and play on the grass than adults.

Try walking around the block in fall, spring and summer without picking up chemicals from the overspray on sidewalks.

Taken a step further, these chemicals are a threat to our fresh water supply. It is just a matter of time that the Rahway River watershed develops the problems of the Raritan Watershed Further South, the Chesapeake Bay has lost much of the oyster beds and crabbing industry from the fertilizers and other chemicals from the Susquehanna River watershed.

Florida is facing a restoration running into the billions from the population growth on the Gulf Coast and the agricultural growth above the Everglades affecting the fresh water. This has created red tides killing fish and also impacting the shrimp and scallop industries.

Hopefully, our Council and Mayor will start an IPM Program, with monitoring, in our health code and legislate the cleanup of all lawn chemical overspray on all sidewalks.

This is definitely in the quality of life category. If smoking can be controlled, as it has been by public support, certainly we can control what goes into our homes, yards, gardens, parks, public buildings and water table and rivers.

Judith Schwartz
Scotch Plains

Harvey Roberson
Westfield

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Residents Advised About Possible Scams By Chimney Sweeps

I hope to alert our area residents of a possible telephone scam, which I suspect is occurring. Yesterday, mid-afternoon, my son received a phone call from a company identifying itself as a chimney sweep. The call was supposedly made to confirm an appointment already made. My son informed the caller that he was not the owner of the home so a follow-up call would be necessary.

At 5:20 p.m., a man identifying himself from a company called Advance, insisted that it was imperative that I have my chimney cleaned and serviced as soon as possible because it had not been done for years.

I informed this individual that I am a real estate broker and have a chimney sweep to service my needs, plus those of my clients. He further stated that "the chimney sweep that I was using was not a recognized sweep because my name was listed on the national database."

This individual is extremely aggressive and used fear tactics. He did not even back off when I identified my profession. The number from which he is calling is unlisted, so it is impossible to determine its origin.

I have been on the telephone with Bell Atlantic not only to report this incident, but to also get some advice as to alerting area residents. Notification via our local newspaper and/or local cable channel was the suggestion. This is the second call that I have received of this nature within the last several months, although I cannot absolutely state that it was the same person or company.

Dorothy McDevitt
Westfield

Dr. Donna Levy's Kin Thankful For Sympathy

Words cannot convey the gratitude we feel toward residents of Westfield and surrounding communities who have expressed, in countless ways, their high regard for Dr. Donna Jean Levy, our wife and mother, who died suddenly on January 27.

The heartfelt reaction to Donna's passing is a fitting tribute to her gentle spirit and her good works.

Gary L. Rubin,
Adam and Zachary Rubin
Westfield

POPCORN™

Analyze This: Prognosis -- Laughter

By Michael S. Goldberger

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

3 popcorns

Analyze This makes audiences an offer they can't refuse. Writer-director Harold Ramis' highly congenial Mafia spoof provides viewers with laughter, and lots of it. All moviegoers have to do in return is overlook the film's flaws. It's not hard to do.

Proposing that a major New York don (Robert De Niro) might seek out a psychiatrist (Billy Crystal) to ease his anxieties as a watershed meeting of all the crime family bosses approaches, Mr. Ramis manages to make *Analyze This* funnier than it has any right to be. While possessing neither the comedy magic of his classic *Caddyshack* nor the inventiveness of his *Groundhog Day*, this latest effort is a shrewdly constructed assault on the funny bone just the same.

Astutely employing Robert De Niro and Billy Crystal in the principal roles, the filmmaker combines the companionable ease with his exemplary comic-timing skills and a good-hearted script (co-written with Peter Tolan and Kenneth Lerner).

Ten main jokes score sure-fire guffaws; about 15 supportive gags garner medium-range cackles; and 20 lesser giggle-getters keep things bubbling. The result is a requisite three laughs a minute, propelling the conventional farce to often hilarious heights.

So what if it's predictable. Who cares if the likable characters are no thicker than cardboard? When was the last time you saw a movie that actually didn't give you enough time to stop laughing between jokes? See it with a full audience and you're bound to miss some lines.

De Niro, capitalizing on his *Mafioso* emeritus status, effortlessly balances the role of mobster Paul Vitti on his pinky finger. At one moment terribly dangerous, and then suddenly, uncharacteristically, vulnerable and humane, De Niro's new age godfather is glibly conceived, his tongue properly poised in cheek.

When one of his lieutenants suggests that they must change with the times, the gangster sarcastically asks, "You think I should get a website?" But alas, the thug is troubled of late by things that never faded him before. And it's not easy running a crime empire when you're subject to unexplainable fits of uncontrolled weeping.

This situation has Vitti's top henchman, Jelly, understandably concerned. It won't bode well for the family if the rival bosses sense this new fear.

Particularly interested in this potential Achilles heel would be covetous Primo Sindone (Chazz Palminteri), the other New York boss. Only Vitti stands in his way to Big Apple domination.

Wonderfully rendered by Paul Viterelli in the film's best supporting performance, Jelly is a self-admitted moron with a face like a pock-marked bulldog, as loyal as he is Runyonesque. And remembering that he recently ran into a shrink, literally, during a fender bender that humorously exposed the mobster's "Goodfellas-like" cargo when the trunk popped open, the sidekick appraises his boss of the meeting. "He even had a business card," an impressed Jelly notes, a sure sign of the doctor's professional ability.

Enters Dr. Ben Sobel, up until this moment a "family" psychiatrist catering almost exclusively to bored housewives and the generally mundane of Westchester County. Actually, more correctly, enters Boss Vitti, unannounced, barging into the good doctor's office and demanding professional services.

Of course, Dr. Sobel refuses to treat the hood. Naturally, Mr. Vitti insists otherwise. So much for that argument. "So, what's my goal here?" asks the frustrated psychiatrist. "To make you a happy, well-adjusted gangster?"

The wacky relationship established, opposite worlds clash and the dance begins. Cultures are exchanged. In time, the crime boss begins to spout psychobabble (his enemies grow uneasy when he talks about "closure") and buttoned-down Ben gets to chum it up with the gumbabs.

During the course of therapy, the doc tells Paul about Freud's take on the Oedipal tale. "Those Greeks," mutters the wise guy. "I can't even call my mother on the phone since you told me that."

Mr. Crystal, approaching the role from a comedian's vantage point, provides a nice match to De Niro's satirically cant. Meanwhile, Dr. Sobel has his own problems. He is scheduled to wed for a second time. But it seems that his big-time psychiatrist dad (Bill Macy) can't (or is it won't?) take off from book signings to attend the nuptials.

Coincidentally, as permissibly soppy story parallels go, the Mafia boss also has some unresolved issues with his tops-in-his-dad, a former mob bigwig who, due to occupational hazards, met an untimely end. Will the doctor and patient share matching epiphanies?

Excited about this therapy stuff, a la *What About Bob* the anxious *Mafioso* follows Dr. Sobel to his wedding in Miami. There, the zealous patient unintentionally trashes his therapist's big day when one of Primo Sindone's assassins is thwarted and his corpse does a



AGONY

The introduction to the "Wide World of Sports," a popular television sports variety show, contains this phrase: "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." According to ancient Greeks, as well as most modern athletes, there is agony in victory, too.

"Agony" is the Greek word for "a contest or assembly of people watching games." The Latin word "agonia" became associated with "the contest for victory," itself.

In the English version of "agony," the original sense of the contest is transferred to the pain experienced by the participants in a contest; pain that is readily observed on the faces of runners at the finish line. "Agony" currently means "a very great mental or physical pain" and is synonymous with distress.

In many athletic contests, "agony" goes with the territory, regardless of whether you are a winner or loser. The victors also enjoy the exhilaration that comes with victory, while the losers are left with the emptiness and disappointment of defeat.

SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD GIRLS SCOUTS

Local Cadette Scouts Inspired By Fifteen Career Women

By Barbara Cronenberger-Meyer

Fifteen women gathered on a recent Wednesday evening to speak to dozens of Cadette Girl Scouts about their chosen careers.

Representing both traditional and non-traditional careers for women, all stressed that determination, belief in one's self and one's choice, will go far in helping today's young women attain their chosen careers.

The women, mostly from local Union County communities, gathered at Terrill Middle School in late January, to assist Cadette Troops No. 1 and No. 751 in the career-exploration activities for the Dreams-to-Reality project.

Writer Loretta Bolger Wish of Somerset congratulated the Scouts on their note-taking, recognizing this as a familiar step in her writing process — adapted to many different jobs.

Plainfield's Judy Mc Loughlin spoke of her diverse jobs providing her with a broad foundation for the challenging careers of commercial real estate, full-time parenting, and "active citizen."

Synnovie Reilly of Elizabeth stressed the demands of time and energy required for a satisfying acting career. Mindy Koprowski from Scotch Plains outlined the flexibility she has found in working for a government agency such as the IRS, permitting her time to spend with her children and to complete law school.

Fanwood's Patrice Simms pointed out the drive a mortgage banker needs to succeed each day and detailed her diverse careers as life presented new opportunities. She enlightened the girls about "commission-only" pay careers.

Carolyn Sorge of Scotch Plains spoke of the rewards of helping people in life-and-death crises through her volunteer work as a firefighter and as a rescue squad member — beyond her daytime career.

Beverly Peel described a challenging career as a Scotch Plains police officer. The long beginner's hours balance out with opportunities to impact individuals

and the community, and with chances to advance in her career.

Fanwood Mayor Marianne S. Connelly described how she was drawn into political office, citing the examples of women like Patricia Kuran who inspired her dedication.

Julie Buckley of Fanwood reflected on her choice to work in pharmaceutical research, and pointed out the progress in flexible schedules that enable working mothers to be more effective for the family and the employer.

Elaine Pratt, also of Fanwood, described how she built on enjoying school subjects to enter her pharmaceutical career, and how she built on her learning in each subsequent role.

Scotch Plains' Kathy Quoi shared her thrill of scientific discovery in the laboratory, and detailed her job's impact on her daughters.

Connie Sensor of Scotch Plains sketched the growing opportunities for young women entering nursing careers, rewarding in many unexpected ways.

Gerri Milano of Edison described her journey as a production engineer, consultant, and professor at NJIT, and how she is adapting her administrator's schedule to her growing family's activities.

Each panel member spoke briefly, then mingled with the Scouts to answer questions.

Girl Scouting recognizes the importance of positive role models in careers — paid and unpaid — that reflect the diversity of all girls' talents and interests, particularly at impressionable middle-school ages.

The time donated by these local women on a busy week night could well influence these young women to become successful women with careers and families, and not to be afraid of a true challenge.

This column, from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Girl Scouts, appears monthly in The Westfield Leader and The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood.

Letters to the Editor

Proposed Assisted Living Facility Would Be Unnecessary; Monstrosity

On March 4, the Scotch Plains Board of Adjustment heard the continuation of an application to build a 90-bed, 58,000-square foot facility on Martine Avenue opposite the intersection of Martine with East Broad.

There was an overflow crowd of close

Jennifer Ryan's Family Thankful For Support

We wish to thank so many people for their overwhelming support and outpouring of love for Jennifer Ryan. Her dedication to the Presbyterian Church's Youth Fellowship will be furthered thanks to the many generous donations in her memory.

Her design and preservation of some of Westfield's precious landscape will continue to serve as a visual memory of her and of her wonderful talents.

Most of all, her infectious smile and caring attitude will live in the hearts of all whom she touched.

Peter, Betty and Allison Ryan
Westfield

to 150 people (my unofficial count) in attendance, the vast majority of this crowd, if not all the people, judging from the reaction to the testimony, were very much against this application.

An "expert" on gerontology testified that there was a need for more such facilities throughout the state and that there was a severe shortage of beds in this category. Nothing could be further from the truth, so much for expert witnesses.

My neighbors and I, and my wife, visited and called approximately 20 facilities in the immediate area — Fanwood, Mountainside, Cranford, Plainfield, Edison and others. There is lots of room in just about every one of the facilities we checked on for everyone.

I mean, if a hundred or more people wanted to become clients tomorrow, they could be accommodated, just have \$3,000 to \$5,000 per month ready per person.

This site is in the middle of an R-1 zone where the entire surrounding area is made up of single-family homes. This would be the first commercial entity in the area, if approved.

Traffic is a serious problem — Martine Avenue is probably the busiest street in Scotch Plains and this corner in particular is a very "difficult" intersection with numerous cars at all hours (East Broad, Martine Avenue and Fenimore Drive).

There are many other reasons why this monstrosity does not belong here, particularly since less than a mile away we have the Chelsea in Fanwood, Ashbrook Nursing less than a mile away has room, we have our own Senior Citizens Housing further down on Martine Avenue and there is an area referred to as Broadway which is zoned to accommodate such a facility and which is twice the area of the Martine Avenue site.

The next meetings are scheduled for Monday, March 15, Wednesday, March 24 and Tuesday, March 30. I urge all residents who wish to preserve the residential, single-family nature of this neighborhood to attend.

George L. Tomkin
Scotch Plains

